

Financial Assistance and Subsidies for Child Care

The Child Care Certificate Program is the Tennessee's child care assistance program for children of low income participating in the Families First program. Funding for the Child Care Certificate Program is provided by the federal Families First/TANF block grant and the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG). This is often referred to as the subsidized child care program. Families must be determined eligible by DHS staff before participating in the program. There are several areas of child care assistance that participants may be eligible for:

Smart Steps Child Care Payment Assistance.

This program was established to provide child care payment assistance to working families or those pursuing post-secondary educational goals. The family must pay a co-pay fee based on a sliding income scale. The program is for children six (6) weeks to kindergarten and only TDHS licensed or DOE approved care may be utilized.

You may be eligible for Smart Steps Child Care Payment Assistance if you meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Must be employed no less than 30 hours per week, or be enrolled and attending a post-secondary education program full-time, or a combination of both
- Must have a child between ages six (6) weeks old through five (5) years old
- Household gross income must be below the 85th percentile of the State Median Income (SMI) for Tennessee. Please refer to the flyer at the link below for the Household Income Limits chart.

Other Areas for Child Care Assistance:

- **Families First Child Care Assistance.** Parents participating in the Families First program who need child care to complete the work activities in their personal responsibility plan can receive financial assistance with the cost of child care. Families First parents do not pay a parent co-pay in this program. Eligibility is based on Families First income guidelines.
- **Transitional Child Care Assistance.** Parents whose Families First case has closed are potentially eligible for 18 months of transitional child care assistance. Each parent must meet a work activity requirement of 30 hours per week in order to be eligible for this program. Parents must pay a co-pay fee based on a sliding income scale.
- **At-Risk Child Only.** Non-parental guardians who are receiving Families First for a related child may be eligible for this child care assistance. Eligible guardians must pay a co-pay fee based on a sliding income scale and must participate in 30 hours of work, training or education weekly.
- **Teen Child Care Assistance.** This program is for eligible high school or middle school mothers. These young mothers must stay in school in order to receive child care assistance. Parents must pay a co-pay fee based on a sliding income scale.

